A student is served dinner in McCormick dining hall, which may change to a la carte system under proposals currently being considered. (Photo by Jonathan Cohen)

**Seniors rate DSA Office**

By Stephanie Pollock

Seniors who have worked closely with the Office of the Dean for Student Affairs (DSA) have rated its performance as uneven, but all have expressed concern with a lack of communication between the DSA and students.

Jan Hakala '81, Undergraduate Association President (UAP) in 1979-80, said that "the administration does not seem to be interested in meaningful participation in decisions that affect policy." I don't think [Dean for Student Affairs Shirley McBay] has developed the communications network that the office needs to do a good job," said Nick Adams '81, former Undergraduate Association Vice President. Former UA Finance Board Vice-chairman Raj Tahl said that the Dean's Office had "a distorted perception of what people have to come to the office."

Tahl suggested that McBay "go out and put the flesh" of the administration out to be seen in dormitories and make it a lot more often.

Hakala asked, "Jeff Solis, Co-ordinator of the 1980 Residence/Orientation Week, and Chuck Markham '81, last year's UAP, noted that the different sections of the Dean's Office had varying success with soliciting student input. Solis said that the Undergraduate Academic Support Office (UASO) receives "a lot of input from the students who walk to the door." Both Solis and Markham mentioned the success of the residence section in obtaining and using student opinion.

Solis cited the President's lunchrooms sponsored by the residence section, while Markham commended Associate Dean for Residential Robert Sherwood for his conference at Endicott House at which students helped to develop the DSA's recommendation for smaller class size.

Evaluations of McBay's performance during her first year were sympathetic. Hakala called McBay "an extraordinarily talented person," adding that she indicated that the selection process that led to her appointment was based too badly as it was." Tahl cited McBay's previous position at the National Science Foundation, noting that "she carried some baggage from Washington; the assets were word processors and priorities, but it is bad that students have to lobby her." Tahl expressed concern that the need for such lobbying would create friction since some students would have an inside track to help them.

"It is reassuring that they [Solof and Tahl] are aware that they had to lobby McBay." The performances of the sections of the Dean's Office have been uneven. The residence section, Student Assistance Services (SAS), Undergraduate Academic Support Office (UASO) and Steve Rosenblith, Institute Professor of Planning Office, is "pulling out of the archives" ideals for the current year, the first in over three years, the subject of suicide has recently received greater attention from the MIT community.

The subject of suicide is "stepped on in my head," explained Priscilla-in-Chief Merriann Kaminsky, Medical Department Head. "I think a lot of the people who are considering suicide need to be seen in dormitories and listened to more often." Another East Campus freshman said, "Things are improving." Neal Markham '81, Assistant to the President, said that "she carried some other concerns with her when she came." It is a problem that a student can be "stepped on [by a suicidal person]."

A comparison statistics concerning suicide tend to be a "rubbery yardstick." "Numbers don't impress me," he said, "it is the circumstances that lead to these things that are important. He added, however, that "one suicide is too many." The academic world is under a great deal of strain, especially for funding," Kulman said, "but I doubt it's worse here [at MIT] than elsewhere." He cited the large increase in the community as another source of strain. "To learn how many species is a difficult thing," he explained.

"Social isolation increases a person's vulnerability to one's worst fears," Kulman said. "Supportive friends are crucial. It is not a large number of relationships but meaningful relationships that are important, he emphasized.

"It is the function of talking to a person in distress that, even if a person is unhappy or even depressed," said Barry Chesky '82, Co-ordinator of Nightline. He stressed that Nightline is not only a suicide line, but an informational service or just a friendly ear.

Nightline personnel, he explained, are not professionally trained, but they are "very useful for investigating cases that are referred to it and provide an opportunity for investigating conflict of interest with professionals when appropriate." Kulman said that people under stress "don't have to go to an expert." He added that the social resources in the MIT community are better than in most. Associate Dean for Student Affairs Robert Randolph said, "the real fact is that there is someone out there who really thinks no one cares what they do to themselves.

Randolph affirmed, "We are committed to the notion that we are in business to prevent suicide." He said that people in distress can be helped by just finding out that others have had and dealt with similar problems. Just thinking about suicide is not abnormal, he said, however, "the problems arise if they think they will act on it." Many people are "ambivalent about most things," explained Special Assistant to the President Mary Ross. People considering suicide often alternate between being suicidal and feeling shame for being suicidal, she observed.

"I wouldn't give it an A-plus,... Department heads sometimes hesitate to push their colleagues," Kulman said.

Faculty members must annual-ly report all aspects of their out-put, including consulting and research. Randolph explained that as consulting work or work on a corporation's board of directors, to the heads of their departments for review of possible conflict of interest with their work at MIT. Institute policy suggests that outside ae-tivities be limited to an average of one day a week of a professor's time.

"By Laura Farhi

**Conflict of interest policy OK**

By Tony Zamparini

The Institute's present system for investigating faculty member's conflicts of interest has been given a passing grade by Walter Solof, Assistant to the President, and former Provost. "If I had to give it a grade I'd say it's passing." Proost Francis Low said, "There are bound to be situations of conflict and not big [the system for checking such conflicts] is pretty good." Faculty and staff reports on outside work are due before the summer. Department heads can refer cases involving possible con-flicts of interest for consultation to the faculty Committee on Out-side Professional Activities.

This committee reviews all cases that are referred to it and advises faculty members on possi-ble changes in the policy.

An informal survey of stu-dents at several East Coast colleges finds some students' dining plans noteworthy.

**Suicide "myths" cleared**

By Gordon Hunter

As a result of two suicides of registered MIT students this academic year, the first cases in over three years, the subject of suicide has recently received greater attention from the MIT community.

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